WHITE DWARF

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The Science Fiction and Fantasy Games Magazine

This Issue

- THE MONSTERMARK — Monster Malignity in D&D
- METAMORPHOSIS ALPHA — Review and suggestions
- COMPETITIVE D&D — An Introduction

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CHRIS HARVEY

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WHITE DWARF

Over the past two years the state of the art of wargaming has seen dramatic change. Until then only tanks, French Hussars and Ancient Britons were to be seen roaming the wargaming tables. But in 1974 two Americans by the names of Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson had just finished putting together a set of rules that were to revolutionise the hobby. They had invented DUNGEONS & DRAGONS (D&D).

D&D was the first (and still is the best) commercially produced game based on a Fantasy/Sword & Sorcery theme. This, together with the ingenious concept of 'role-playing', opened up new horizons in games playing. Firstly, the use of monsters and magic would introduce completely new combat systems. Secondly, players would begin to identify with the characters they role-played to protect them at all costs. Being so original it was obvious that D&D was going to have tremendous impact on the games world. And so it did.

Today, there are over 50 games available based on Science Fiction and Fantasy (SF/F). There are also 10 companies making SF/F ranges of minature figurines. There are literally thousands of SF/F novels which offer a wealth of background information. It is a combination of these which has made SF/F gaming a hobby in its own right and it is in support of these games, with particular reference to D&D, that this magazine has been published.

It is hoped that WHITE DWARF will serve as a vehicle for articles and comment on SF/F games. This is issue 1, we hope you like it.

Ian Livingstone

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CHRIS BEAUMONT 1977

Life aboard a lost starship inhabited by mutated animals and plants awaits all players of the new Science Fiction role-playing game. . . . .

METAMORPHOSIS ALPHA

by Ian Livingstone

Have you ever met a 3 foot long electronically charged worm or a two-headed human mutant called Joe-Jim? No? Well they and lots of others, are all to be found in *Metamorphosis Alpha,* the latest role-playing game rulebook to come out of the TSR melting pot. It is very much related to its precessor, Dungeons & Dragons, in that the game necessitates one player becoming a referee and creating a *game world* whilst the other players *role-play* their own personal characters in that world.

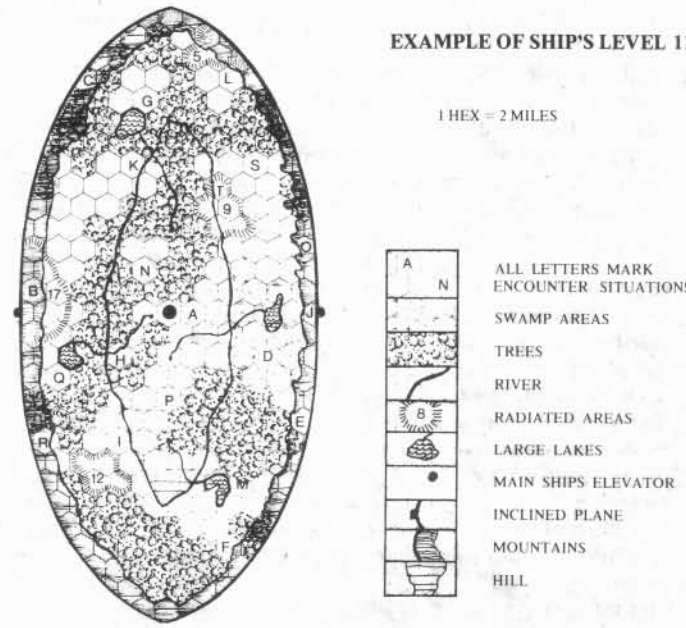
Whereas D&D is based on a fantasy world of heroes, magicians and monsters, Metamorphosis Alpha (MA) is set in the 23rd Century and is a game of science-fiction adventures on board a lost starship. Before explaining how the game is actually played I feel a little historical background information is required to set the scene.

Starship Warden was one of the hundreds of colonisation ships of the 23rd Century built to help relieve the terrible overpopulation problem existing on Old Terra (Earth). These ships were of a tremendous size built to carry some 1½ million colonists, livestock and flora and fauna of Earth to the hundreds of inhabitable worlds in far off galaxies. Starship Warden was elliptical in shape and an incredible 50 miles in length, with a width of 25 miles and a height of 8½ miles. It was divided into 17 decks of varying heights related to function. For example, there were city, farming, raw material, administration decks and many more. The ship took 11 years to complete and finally left the Sol System in 2290.

Unfortunately, for all on board, disaster hit the ship. Approximately one-third of the way to its destination, Warden passed through the fringe of a cloud of space radiation. It was an unknown type of radiation and passed through all the ship's defence mechanisms and screens. Every living thing on board suffered as a result. Most of the colonists and much of the livestock perished instantly. The few humans who remained alive became solely concerned with day-to-day survival matters. The flora and fauna too were affected. Strange mutations appeared that were to become a threat to those on board. Life regressed to a state of savagery, and concern for the ship and its original mission was soon lost. The Warden's systems were maintained in a minimum operative state by its main computer together with a few operational robots. Time went by and later generations were found to suffer physical and mental mutations. The livestock also suffered mutations with some animals gaining the intelligence to communicate, walk and hunt like man; thus also posing a threat to the humans on board. The ship travelled on past its destination and it is at this stage that the scenario for the game is set.

Before play can actually commence it is necessary for one player to volunteer to act as Starship Master (SM). He has the long and daunting task of creating, i.e. drawing up on sheets of hex paper, an entire Starship and its contents — all 17 levels of it! The example deck below is one which is shown in MA as a guide for SMs.

From the letter key shown, hex H, for example, is the location of a human settlement of 36 females and ten males, plus 16 children. The females are amazon types who do all the fighting and hunting for the tribe. A poison is used (intensity level 18) for the tips of hunting arrows. The tribe may at first befriend strangers, but at an opportune time will subdue them if possible and enslave them. One of the existing slaves is a male who knows where a command colour band is buried close to the village, and he knows how to operate any type of robot.



However, as one hex = two miles, each hex will require a detailed breakdown and it is, therefore, unlikely that more than one deck will be needed until after a number of campaign games have been played.

The rules go a long way to alleviate the task of the SM. Ship's devices, units and equipment are listed and explained at length as are the non-player mutated animals, insects and plants which lie in wait for any unprepared wanderers.

Player characters can be one of three types: *human, mutated humanoid* or *mutated creature.* All three types have the following abilities: *radiation resistance, mental resistance, dexterity, constitution* and *strength.* Humans also have a *leadership potential* ability whilst the other two types have physical and mental mutations of beneficial use, e.g. wings or radiated eyes. However, they will also suffer at least one defect in either/or both mutational categories, e.g. haemophilia or fear of humans. Each type is assumed to possess the normal materials common to his tribe (clothes, weapons, armour, etc.) plus any other items the SM sees fit to donate at the start.

Once the starship has been mapped out and the players have selected their respective characters, the game may begin. It is assumed that because of the radiation and subsequent disorder and degeneration all knowledge of the Starship and its contents has been lost. The object of the game is for players to explore the Starship in search of food and technological devices whilst there is an overall goal to gain complete knowledge and control of the Starship. There are hundreds of items on board of differing complexity which can be found by players — from *disruptor pistols* and *portable energy lamps* to *security robots.* Intelligence of the finder cross-indexed with the nature of the item determines whether or not the

continued on page 6

METAMORPHOSIS ALPHA

continued from page 5

item can be properley employed.

It is obviously in the interests of both the SM and the players that the decks are full of interesting objects and situations. The rules themselves offer a great deal of information but it is always preferable to be as original as possible. To this end, I suggest that the following SF novels should be read:

Orphans of the Sky by Robert Heinlein (Panther, 40p)
Non-Stop by Brian Aldiss (Pan, 60p)
Captive Universe by Harry Harrison (Berkley, $1.25)

Orphans of the Sky and Non-Stop are somewhat more relevant than Captive Universe but all three are worth a read. It is probable that after having read the first two, James Ward, the inventor of MA, got the idea for the game although no credit is given as such. Briefly, without spoiling the reading of the books, I'll summarise them and suggest ideas that can be incorporated into the game.

Orphans of the Sky centres around the struggle between two opposing factions aboard a 22nd Century colonisation Starship bound for Proxima Centauri. En route disaster struck in the form of a mutiny and destruction of parts of the Starship. Defective screens allowed radiation to penetrate and left subsequent generations without knowledge of the mission and, even worse, left some with gross physical mutations. These people were known as the 'Muties' and they lived in the upper deck sections of the starship where gravity was almost zero. However, the Muties had certain knowledge of the starship including the fact there had once been a mission and 'Ship' was not the whole universe. They were led by a formidable two-headed character called Joe-Jim who always had long arguments with himself before making a decision! He led the raids on the physically normal people of the lower levels who were a highly superstitious and religious lot, believing 'Ship' to be immobile and nothing to exist outside it. The hero of the story is a young man called Hugh Hoyland and it is his desire for knowledge that leads him to the upper levels to encounter Joe-Jim and his Muties. A friendship is formed and from that the secrets of 'Ship' are slowly unveiled and the sad truth learned. Useful adaptations that can be incorporated into MA are:

(i) The use of varying degrees of gravitation and its effect on movement and combat. For example, during combat, a *Gravitational Effects Chart* related to the number of levels above or below 'home' deck (deck of origin) should be consulted to add a factor to the number required on the *Hit or Miss Chart* in MA to register a hit.

GRAVITATIONAL EFFECTS CHART

COMBAT DECK

DECK OF ORIGIN	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1	0	0	+1	+1	+2	+2	+3	+3	+4	+4	+5	+5	+6	+6	+7	+7	+8
2	0	0	0	+1	+1	+2	+2	+3	+3	+4	+4	+5	+5	+6	+6	+7	+7
3	+1	0	0	0	+1	+1	+2	+2	+3	+3	+4	+4	+5	+5	+6	+6	+7
4	+1	+1	0	0	0	+1	+1	+2	+2	+3	+3	+4	+4	+5	+5	+6	+6
5	+2	+1	+1	0	0	0	+1	+1	+2	+2	+3	+3	+4	+4	+5	+5	+6
6	+2	+2	+1	+1	0	0	0	+1	+1	+2	+2	+3	+3	+4	+4	+5	+5
7	+3	+2	+2	+1	+1	0	0	0	+1	+1	+2	+2	+3	+3	+4	+4	+5
8	+3	+3	+2	+2	+1	+1	0	0	0	+1	+1	+2	+2	+3	+3	+4	+4
9	+4	+3	+3	+2	+2	+1	+1	0	0	0	+1	+1	+2	+2	+3	+3	+4
10	+4	+4	+3	+3	+2	+2	+1	+1	0	0	0	+1	+1	+2	+2	+3	+3
11	+5	+4	+4	+3	+3	+2	+2	+1	+1	0	0	0	+1	+1	+2	+2	+3
12	+5	+5	+4	+4	+3	+3	+2	+2	+2	+1	0	0	0	+1	+1	+2	+2
13	+5	+5	+5	+4	+4	+3	+3	+2	+2	+1	+1	0	0	0	+1	+1	+2
14	+6	+6	+5	+5	+5	+4	+3	+3	+2	+2	+1	+1	0	0	0	+1	+1
15	+7	+6	+6	+5	+5	+4	+4	+3	+3	+2	+2	+1	+1	0	0	0	+1
16	+7	+7	+6	+6	+5	+5	+4	+4	+3	+3	+2	+2	+1	+1	0	0	0
17	+8	+7	+7	+6	+6	+5	+5	+4	+4	+3	+3	+2	+2	+1	+1	0	0

To use the chart, cross-index the attacker's deck of origin with the level of deck on which combat is taking place, assuming the defender's 'home' to be that combat deck. If, however, the defender is also from another level, the following adjustment must be made:

First locate the deck on which combat is taking place. Cross-index both the attacker's *and* the defender's deck of origin and whoever has the higher factor must add on the *difference* between the two. Thus, if a man whose place of origin is deck 14 is fighting a man of deck 4 on deck 11, the man from deck 4 would have to add +2 to his *Hit or Miss* roll.

(ii) The introduction of strange superstitions and religions on various levels could add an interesting aspect to the game. For example, people on a certain level might take all written words as gospel and not be able to differentiate between fact and fiction. One tribe on that level might regard, taking matters to extremes, an old sports journal as their 'Bible' and might worship Manchester City (or their 23rd Century equivalent) imitating the soccer fans of Earth, believing it to be an important religious festival. Intruders from other levels might be punished if they tried to interfere etc.

(iii) The introduction of class structures and, perhaps, an agricultural barter economy.

(iv) The introduction of Law and Order, varying vastly between decks with a death penalty for murder by a raider from another level of "making the Trip". In other words, being place in the "Converter", the starship's main fuel and power source which has the function of transforming any object into energy.

Non-Stop is also concerned with the struggle of a mutant people, on board a colonisation starship, whose forefathers were struck by disaster. This time it was in the form of a disease, *The Nine Day Ague,* which affected not only humans but livestock and plant life too. The hero's name is Roy Complain and it is he who, together with some strange allies, unravels the mysteries of the starship.

Useful adaptations for MA are:

(i) A race of intelligent and highly organised rats which inhabits the ventilation shafts and air ducts of the starship, thus making them very difficult to reach and exterminate. They are fierce fighters and can drop from the many grills along the passageways and in rooms onto their unsuspecting prey. They also have the ability to communicate and enslave other more docile animals. For example, in *Non-Stop*, they held captive a telepathic rabbit which they forced to drain the mind of human captives in order to gain information. The rats' characteristics are as follows:

Mutation name:	Raggot
Number appearing:	10 – 20
Armour class:	8
Movement:	10 yards per melee turn
Hit die:	1

(ii) The prolific growth of a multi-purpose plant, the *Ponic* for use by those on board. Edible sap; constructional material and weapons from the stalks; medicine from the leaves; food, buttons and counters from the seeds etc. They are attracted by light and will quickly grow over little-used pathways.

(iii) Diseases could be incorporated into the game with only certain types affecting humans or specific mutants. For example the *Ague,* if survived, would cause physiological modification; new proteins in the Survivor's body would increase his metabolic rate to such an extent that he would move four times as fast as normal but his life expectancy would be brought down to 20 years.

Captive Universe is, as you might now have guessed, concerned with the exploits of two very different peoples aboard a colonisation starship. There are the *Aztecs,* a highly religious and superstitious agricultural society living in an enclosed valley who believe themselves to be suffering for the evil deeds of their forefathers. There are also the *Watchers* who are effectively the crew members. Both the *Aztecs* and the *Watchers* have lost their powers of reasoning and it is upon the hero, Chimal, to unite the two peoples and put the

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starship on course.

Although not as relevant or as useful as the other two books, the following points could be incorporated into the game:

(i) Priests could be the masters of a certain deck holding their tribes in permanent religious fear. Ritual human sacrifices to various gods should be carried out quite frequently.

(ii) Mechanical gods in the form of grotesque robots programmed to be attracted by body heat and to decapitate anybody in range could be used on superstitious tribes to keep them off the streets at night to enable others to carry out safe raids.

(iii) A ship's security system that will automatically flash a warning light if any vital equipment or life support system is incorrectly used and will trigger a laser gun to kill the tamperer if he persists.

There are obviously a lot more points to be extracted from the books but not shown in this article. This is for two reasons. Firstly, to leave sufficient information which will not be generally known and secondly, this article would have filled the entire magazine!

Back to the rules themselves and criticisms. There are not many but just enough to irritate. The initial task of designing the starship and its contents is lengthy — unless your players want to play for the next four years solid, I suggest a smaller starship (same number of decks). Unlike D&D where there is a definite objective to acquire experience points and thus rise in personal status, the objective in MA is mere survival and I assume status is correlated to type of weapon possessed, the initial allocation thereof which is also a bit vague in the rules. Some of the human mutants are not feasible. To have a 4" high human mutant of equal intelligence to a 6' high human is just not possible and should not, therefore, be allowed. Personally, I do not like the names given to the animal mutations — bearoid, grabber, stabber etc. all sound a bit unimaginative.

Nevertheless, MA has the makings of an excellent game despite my minor gripes. It has a lot of original ideas and will, no doubt become popular in its own right — even for the people who purchase it initially with the intention of using it as another D&D scenario.

As a final postscript, if anybody has already created additional tables, rules, equipment, mutated animals or plants that they feel might be of use to other players, please send them to the Editor.

D&D SOCIETY NEWS

On 12th February 1977 at *Games Day II*, a formal D&D Society was formed with the intention of bringing together players who were without co-players (the only opponent in D&D is the GM!). The inaugural meeting of the Society took place at *D&D-Day* on 12th March and members elected to the Committee were:

Hartley Patterson	—	Chairman
Nick Slope	—	Secretary
Clive Wardley	—	Treasurer

It was decided that the Society's basic aim would be to offer low-cost services in order to:

(i) bring players in contact with one another
(ii) clarify basic D&D rulebook problem areas
(iii) co-ordinate weekend D&D conventions

Whether or not your name and address appeared on the D&D Society mailing list published in Owl & Weasel, please send 25p (stamps, POs or cheques) to Clive Wardley, 93 Mortlake Road, Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 4AA to officially join the D&D Society.

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Out of the confusion of varying monster statistics comes a new system for assessing a monster's relative nastiness

The Monstermark System

by Don Turnbull

In *Owl & Weasel 22* I introduced a monster rating system, and this article develops on that introduction, so those veterans of the O&W article can probably skip the first bit. I will tell you where to come back. Those sluggards who did not subscribe to O&W, however (why not??) will need a brief review.

I was trying to provide a systematic method of assessing a monster's relative malignity, so that new monsters (from Strategic Review, Dungeoneer etc. – and I wonder how many of you use EPT monsters in non-EPT dungeons?) could be assigned with reasonable accuracy to levels. As it happens, revised monster level tables are not the only product of the system, particularly in its newer refined form. Many have criticised the Greyhawk experience points table, for instance, and this method provides a basis for quite accurate reappraisal. The method gives dungeonmasters better guidance than previously available on the thorny question of how many wandering monsters should appear against a party of a particular size and strength. Also – is a 4 dice +2 Su Monster about as nasty as a 4-dice Giant Snake? This method clothes the bare bones of intuition.

The 'D' Factor

In the previous O&W article I defined two factors for each monster. The first, which I now call **D** (Defence), is a measure of a monster's vulnerability:–

D = The average number of melee rounds it takes a first level fighter to kill the monster with a 1-8 sword, allowing no bonuses

$$= \frac{\text{The Monster's average hits}}{\text{Probable hits received per round}}$$

$$= \frac{\text{Monster's average hits}}{4\tfrac{1}{2} \times \text{probability of hitting}}$$

$$= \frac{\text{Monster's average hits} \times 40}{9\,(AC+2)}$$ where AC is the monster's armour class.

In case you didn't read (in O&W) the bit about the average roll from a particular die, the average roll of an 8-sided die is (8+1)/2 = 4½; that of a 6-sided die is (6+1)/2 = 3½ etc. So a beast with 4 8-sided dice has an average of 4x4½ = 18 hits. Similarly a beast delivering a 1-10 bite will inflict (10+1)/2 = 5½ hits per bite on average, and a character with 4 4-sided dice will have an average of 10 hits. (Incidentally, do you know the probability of rolling that all-characteristics-above-15 character you have hidden away?).

The 'A' Factor

The other factor which I call **A** (Aggressiveness) enumerates the risk you take in attacking a particular monster, i.e. the number of hits it hands out during the time it takes you to kill it:–

A = the average number of hits a monster would hand out to a character of AC2 during the number of melee rounds denoted by **D.**

= **D** *times* the probability of the monster hitting an AC2 defender each round *times* the average number of hits it delivers if successful.

I will come back to the methods of calculation, in illustrative form, later, but first must note that there are, of course, problems with both factors. A first level fighter, used as the criterion for **D,** can't hit some monsters at all without magic weapons; in this case **D**x is calculated and displayed, where x is the lowest level of fighter capable of delivering damage. A normal sword cannot damage certain monsters no matter how strong or high level the fighter, so **(D)** – or even **(D**x**)** – indicates what the value of **D** would be were normal weapons effective against the monster (and the final assessment of the monster's malignity would have to incorporate some sort of bonus).

Equally, **A** can't be calculated for certain monsters such as Wights which don't hand out hits but instead drain levels (which could be fatal or merely serious, depending on the initial level of the victim). In my view there is no way of assessing a realistic comparative value of **A** in these circumstances.

Another unrealistic element which creeps into both factors is their assumption of one-on-one combat – the possibility of many-to-many melee has to be ignored since the computations soon get far too complex and long-winded. I had to picture a line of first level fighters attacking a monster successively – in other words each would wait for his predecessor to keel over before going into action; this is possible in games involving Andy Davidson, but is far from normal practice.

The Monstermark

Bearing these restrictions in mind, however, it seems that the method is not without value and in this article (Come back, the rest of you!) it is developed further to introduce the Monstermark which I will call **M** (for obvious reasons). For quite a lot of monsters **M** is the same as **A**, but for those with poison, paralising powers, magical defence and attack mechanisms etc. **M** attempts to support **A** as a modified value. For those monsters without an **A** factor, **M** has to be assessed (and these values are open to considerable challenge and debate)

One thing which must be tackled early is the monster attack modes I have devised. I have no doubt other DMs use other modes, and I claim no original thinking in developing the modes; it struck me quite early, however, that a beast would have one helluva job attacking an opponent with the horn on top of its head at the same time as biting him (or someone else) as Greyhawk has it in some cases, so I thought a monster's melee mode had better be regularised. For brevity here I will adopt a standard notation for each monster:

$$N: \quad p_1 n_1 : p_2 n_2 : p_3 n_3 \ldots\ldots : \quad S$$

N refers to the number of attacks the monster makes per melee round (usually one). I have ignored for simplicity the possibility of attacks on two different victims in the same round, of which some monsters are capable.

$p_1 p_2$ etc. refer to the probability of a particular mode of attack (biting, clawing etc. – the actual mode isn't specified but you can find it in the rules);

while

$n_1 n_2$ etc. represent the average number of hits handed out by that mode of attack if it is successful.

S refers to special powers and may be one or more of a number of things – Po for poison, Pa for paralisation, Ma for magical defence and/or attack methods, Pe for petrifaction, L for level drain, S for strength point drain, and if anything else crops up I will define it then.

A few examples might help to clear up a lot of things at this stage. Let us calculate **D, A** and the melee notation for three different beasts.

continued on page 10

The Monstermark System

continued from page 9

1. A Bugbear has 3 dice +1, AC5, one attack per round, 2-8 damage if successful. It has no special powers.

$$D = \frac{14\frac{1}{2} \times 40}{9 \times 7} = \text{about } 9.2$$

$$A = D \times \frac{2+8}{2} \times 0.4 = \text{about } 18.4$$

Melee notation is: 1:100% 5: –

2. A Manticore has 6 dice +1, AC4 and attacks once per round; 60% of the time it attacks with two 1-3 claws (average 2 each) and a 1-8 bite (average 4½), the other 40% it uses six 1-6 iron spikes. It does nothing special (isn't that lot enough?).

$$D = \frac{29 \times 40}{9 \times 6} = \text{about } 21.5$$

$$A = D \times \frac{9}{20} \left(\left[\frac{6}{10} \times \frac{1+3}{2} \times 2\right] + \left[\frac{6}{10} \times \frac{1+8}{2}\right] + \left[\frac{4}{10} \times \frac{1+6}{2} \times 6\right] \right)$$
$$= \text{about } 145$$

Melee notation is: 1 : 60% 8½ ; 40% 21: –

3. A Giant Snake has 4 dice and AC4; it attacks twice per round – one bite (1-6 plus poison) and one constriction (2-8), we will assume on the same victim. The poison apart, it has no special powers.

$$D = \frac{18 \times 40}{9 \times 6} = 13.3$$

$$A = D \times \frac{9}{20} \left(\frac{1+6}{2} + \frac{2+8}{2} \right) = 51$$

Melee notation is : 2 : 100% 3½ : 100% 5 : Po

I hope this helps illustrate the method of calculation as well as the notation. Applying these methods to some simple human-type monsters:

Monster	AC	Hit Dice	Melee notation	Greyhawk Level	D	A=M
Kobold	7	1	1 : 100% 2½ : –	1	2.2	1.1
Orc	6	1	1 : 100% 3½ : –	1	2.5	2.2
Goblin	6	1½	1 : 100% 2½ : –	1	3.75	2.3
Gnoll/Hobgoblin	5	1½	1 : 100% 4½ : –	2	4.3	4.8
Ogre	5	4+1	1 : 100% 5½ : –	4	12.1	29.9
Hill Giant	4	8	1 : 100% 9 : –	6	26.7	120
Stone Giant	4	9	1 : 100% 10½ : –	6	30	189
For comparison, some simple non-humanoids:						
Stirge	7	1	1 : 100% 2 : –	1	2.2	2
Wildcat	8	2	1 : 100% 10½ : –	–	4	6.3
Lizard Man						
unarmed	5	2+1	1 : 40% 4 : 60% 4½ : –	–	6.3	8.2
armed	5	2+1	1 : 100% 4½ : –	–	6.3	8.6
Bugbear	5	3+1	1 : 100% 5 : –	2	9.2	18.4
Centaur	5	4	1 : 50% 3½ : 50% 4½ : –	–	11.4	29.6
Su Monster	6	4+2	1 : 100% 12½ : –	–	11.1	62.5
Minotaur	6	6	1 : 50% 5 : 20% 2 : 30% 4½ : –	5	15	57.4
Manticore	4	6+1	1 : 60% 8½ : 40% 21 : –	5	21.5	145
Griffon	3	7	1 : 40% 5 : 60% 9 : –	–	28	103.6
Ent	2	8	2 : 100% 10½ : 100% 10½ : –	–	40	420
Invisible Stalker	3	8	1 : 100% 10 : –	5	32	160

It is immediately obvious, even considering only these simple cases, that there is more to this business than hit dice, and anyone who uses that criterion alone to assess the risks of attacking deserves to die a cruel and hard death. Rightly an experience point system based only on hit dice should be questioned (though in fairness to Greyhawk that system does not rely on hit dice alone). An 8-dice Giant is child's play compared with an 8-dice Ent – I'd be more careful which trees you rest under (or whatever it is you do under trees) in future – a 6-dice Minotaur is in reality quite docile, while Su Monsters and Manticora are far more fearsome than one might have thought. Greyhawk's monster level table is, to say the least of it, questionable even on this limited evidence.

Special Powers

Moving on to more complex matters, it will sooner or later (so it might as well be now) be necessary to enumerate the 'bonus' to be assigned to the 'special power' section of the melee notation – in other words to define the relationship between **A** and **M** when they are not equal. All this is very subjective and I would be surprised not to meet with different views, but the following bonus relationships seem to give results which instinctively 'feel' right:

Pa = paralisation	**M** = 2**A**
Pe = petrifaction	**M** = 2½**A**
Po = poison	**M** = 2**A**
Ma= magic attack/ defence methods	**M** = 1½**A** – 3**A** depending on extent
S = Strength point drain	**M** = 1½**A**
L = Level drain	**M** = 2½**A**
R = regeneration potential	**M** = 1½**A**
H = strong hug(Owl Bear)	**M** = 1½**A**

In Ma I have included those cases in which normal weapons are not effective; I think this, on its own, only warrants a 50% bonus since it is rare to have a character without at least a +1 sword, and many DMs will let you purchase them at the local market before the trip.

Using these relationships, we can now look at some monsters with simple special powers, leaving the tough and unusual customers until later. In the odd case of a monster with two or more special powers, the **A–M** bonus is increased accordingly.

Monster	AC	Hit Dice	Melee notation	Greyhawk Level	D	A	M
Shadow	7	2+2	1 : 100% 2½ : S Ma	4	5.4	4.1	8.2
Harpy	7	3	1 : 40% 4 : 60% 3½ : Ma	3	6.7	14.8	22.2
Blink Dog	5	4	1 : 100% 3½ : Ma	4	15.6	24.5	36.8
Gargoyle	5	4	1 : 40% 6½ : 60% 7½ : Ma	4	(11.4)	(26.2)	39.3
Medusa	8	4	2 : 100% 4½ : 100% 2½ : Pe	–	8	22.4	56
Cockatrice	6	5	1 : 100% 3½ : Pe	5	12.5	19.7	49.2
Owl Bear	5	5	1 : 40% 11½ : 60% 7 : H	4	28.6	113.1	169.7
Phase Spider	6	5	1 : 100% 3½ : PoMa	4	12.5	19.7	59.1
Ogre Magi	4	5+2	1 : 100% 6½ : RMa	5	18.1	53.1	106.2
Displacer Beast	4	6	2 : 100% 5 : 100% 5 : Ma	4	30	135	202.5
Intellect Devourer	4	6	1 : 100% 10 : Ma	–	(90)	(405)	1215
Basilisk	4	6+1	1 : 100% 5½ : Pe	6	20.7	51.3	128.4
Lammasu	6	6+2	1 : 100% 7 : Ma	5	16.1	56.4	84.6
Troll	4	6+3	1 : 100% 9½ : R	5	22.2	105.6	158.4
Wyvern	3	7	1 : 67% 3½ : 33% 9 : Po	5	28	74.7	149.4
Gorgon	2	8	1 : 100% 7 : Pe	–	40	140	350
Umber Hulk	2	8	1 : 100% 19 : Ma	5	40	360	540
Couatl	5	9	2 : 100% 2 : 100% 5 : MaPo	–	25.7	108	216
Lurker	6	10	1 : 100% 3½ : Sm	–	25	52.5	131.3

Note: Sm for the Lurker is 'smother' which in the circumstances warrants a **M** = 2½**A** relationship, I think.

Again, clear evidence to show that all in the Greyhawk garden is not lovely. What on earth is the Shadow doing in the fourth monster level? And witness the wide variation in the others – even if my **A – M** relationships are at times suspect (and they are at least arguable) the wide variation exists in **A** alone. Confirmation I think that this method puts us on the right track (although there is the possibility that it puts us consistently on the wrong track . . . . I'm not sure how to prove which is which!)

The Undead and other 'Specials'

At any rate, let us confidently advance to complete the set. So far we have missed the Undead, the Giant Insects, the Lycanthropes, the 'wanderers' and the Fire-Breathers, plus a few very tricky customers, plus any others I have missed, plus EPT monsters and new monsters from any other source. In the *Undead* category we meet for the first time monsters who have no **A** factor, and the values of **M** are, therefore, the product of **D** and instinct. The precise value of **M** is not of course as important as its order of magnitude.

For a Mummy we will need Di = Disease which qualifies for **M** = 1½**A**. In the case of the Mummy, we must also bear in mind that the monster is very vulnerable to fire so the calculation below applies to a fire-proof Mummy (there are other examples of this elsewhere but none perhaps so obvious as as this one). A normal Mummy would have a much smaller **M**; how much smaller is a subjective matter. But let me not stress to much the inadequacies of the system . . . .

Monster	AC	Hit Dice	Melee notation	Greyhawk Level	D	A	M
Skeleton	7	1	1 : 100% 3½ : –	1	2.2	.9	.9
Zombie	7	1	1 : 100% 4½ : –	2	2.2	2	2
Ghoul	6	2	1 : 60% 4 : 40% 2½ : Pa	2	5	3.3	6.6
Wight	5	3	1 : – : LMa	3	(8.6)	–	70
Wraith	3	4	1 : 100% 3½ : LMa	4	(16)	(25.2)	75.6
Mummy	3	5+1	1 : 100% 6½ : DiMa	5	(41.8)	(122.2)	244.4
Spectre	2	6	1 : 100% 4½ : LLMa	5	(30)	(60.75)	243
Vampire	2	8	1 : 100% 5½ : LLMa	6	(40)	(110)	440

A remarkably self-consistent set of results for the Undead which may help us later in drawing up new monster level tables. These calculations also show how important it is to recruit a high-level Cleric to the party – anything worse than a Ghoul is rather too tough for a small cleric-less party. Nowadays some nasty-minded DMs (this one included) are apt to put high-level anti-Clerics with their Undead to challenge and oppose any turning away; this is a dirty trick, of course, but the resulting anti-cleric-v-cleric mental combat may make the psionic rules worth while (I have found no other reason).

So onto the *Giant Insects*, some of which are simple, others less so. I had better explain that my melee notation for the Giant Scorpion, which looks a bit odd, is the result of my ruling that this beauty attacks with two pincers (1–10) each on the same opponent and if either or both pincers hit, the victim also suffers a sting attack (1–4 plus poison) which automatically hits if both pincers have hit but which has the normal probability of hitting if only one pincer has hit. Since it is a 3-dice beast, it requires a roll of 13 or more to hit which means a hit probability of 8/20. Therefore the probability of both pincers missing is $(12/20)^2$ which is 36%, and this is the only time the sting attack is not attempted. So the sting will attack 64% of the time, 16% automatic hit, 48% normal probability of a hit. This makes the calculation for that beast rather complex and it may be worth displaying as an example:

$$D = \frac{\text{Average hits} \times 40}{9\,(AC+2)} = \frac{13\tfrac{1}{2} \times 40}{9 \times 8} = 7\tfrac{1}{2}$$

$$A = 7\tfrac{1}{2} \times \frac{4}{25}\left(\left[\frac{1+10}{2} \times 2\right] + \frac{1+4}{2}\right) + 7\tfrac{1}{2} \times \frac{12}{25}\left(\frac{1+10}{2} + \left[\frac{2}{5} \times \frac{1+4}{2}\right]\right)$$

$$= 7\tfrac{1}{2} \times \frac{26}{5}$$

$$= 39$$

(Incidentally, this prompts me to ask anyone who disagrees with my arithmetic to let me know in what respect we differ. I can't hope to have carried out all these calculations without error).

We need to intorduce De = Deafness and Ad = Acid for the Bombardier Beetle, together warranting **M** = 3**A**. Also note the Giant Wasp's virulent poison requires **M** = 3**A** at least and the Giant Tick as disease-bearer needs **M** = 2½**A**.

Monster	AC	Hit Dice	Melee notation	Greyhawk Level	D	A	M
Giant Fire Beetle	4	1–1	1 : 100% 13½ : –	4	2.6	7	7
Giant Bombardier Beetle	4	1	1 : 100% 6½ : DeAd	4	3.3	5.4	16.2
Giant Spider	7	2	1 : 100% 2 : Po	3	4.4	2.7	5.4
Giant Toad	6	2	1 : 100% 5½ : Po	2	5	8.25	16.5
Giant Leech	8	2	1 : 100% 7 : LPo	–	4	8.4	25.2
Giant Tick	4	3	1 : 100% 2½ : Di	–	10	10	25
Giant Wasp	5	3	1 : 100% 4½ : Po	–	8.6	15.4	46.2
Giant Scorpion	6	3	2 : 2 x 100% 5½ : 64% 2½ : Po	4	7.5	39	78
Giant Snake	4	4	2 : 100% 3½ : 100% 5 : Po	3	13.3	51	102
Giant Boring Beetle	3	5	1 : 100% 10½ : –	4	20	94.5	94.5
Giant Slug	8	12	1 : 100% 6½ : Ad	5	24	109.2	218.4

The *Lycanthropes* are, for a change, relatively easy. None can be hit by normal weapons but that apart there is no complication. Di in this case is lycanthropy which alone would require **M** = 1½**A**, so **M** is at least 2**A** in all cases to reflect lycanthropy and invulnerability to normal weapons.

Monster	AC	Hit Dice	Melee notation	Greyhawk Level	D	A	M
Wererat							
(rat form)	7	3	1 : 100% 2 : MaDi	3	(6.7)	(5.3)	10.6
(human form)	7	3	1 : 100% 4½ : MaDi	3	(6.7)	(12)	24
Werewolf	5	4	1 : 100% 5 : MaDi	4	(11.4)	(22.9)	45.8
Wereboar	4	4+1	1 : 100% 7 : MaDi	4	(14.1)	(44.3)	88.6
Weretiger	3	5	1 : 100% 10½ : MaDi	4	(20)	(94.5)	189
Werebear	2	6	1 : 100% 9 : MaDi H	4	(30)	(162)	405

Again a useful and consistent set of results which belies the Greyhawk tables. Lycanthropes seem to me a much-ignored feature of dungeons – I am sure more could be made of their peculiarities and the behaviour their 'mission' would lead them to exhibit. Methinks the Editor would welcome an article on this subject from someone who has done some in-depth study.

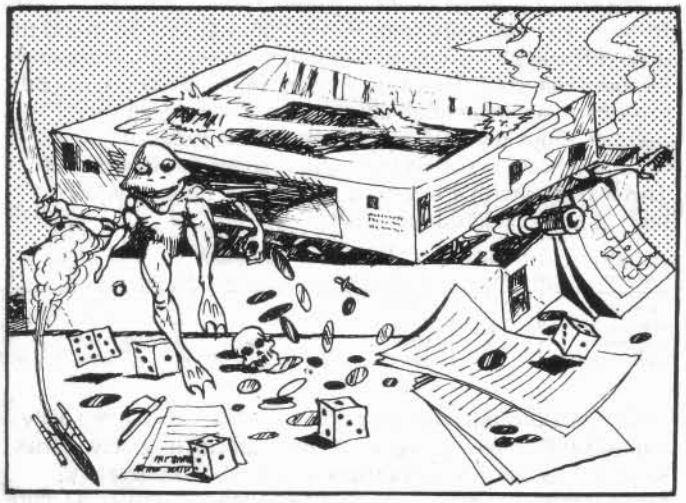
Only a few of the *'wandering' monsters* lend themselves to the analysis. Some (Yellow Mould, Green Slime, Grey Ooze for instance) are really traps rather than true monsters and there is no difficulty in killing or avoiding them once their presence has been detected. The Rust Moster is a damned nuisance but can't harm a person at all unless there is something very peculiar about his insides. Generally, these types of 'wanderer' can be spread throughout all levels of a dungeon. This leaves us with a few 'true' wanderers, none of which present any calculation difficulty.

Monster	AC	Hit Dice	Melee notation	Greyhawk Level	D	A	M
Carrion Crawler	3	3+1	1 : – : 8xPa	2	12.9	–	120
Gelatinous Cube	8	4	1 : 100% 5 : Pa	1	8	18	36
Ochre Jelly	8	5	1 : 100% 7 : –	3	10	31.5	31.5
Black Pudding	6	10	1 : 100% 13½ : –	–	25	202.5	202.5

One obvious question arises here – why is the Ochre Jelly ranked on Greyhawk level 3? Its only special property is that weapon hits cause it to multiply – and who, moderately familiar with dungeon lore, is daft enough to go hitting Ochre Jellies with swords?

Next time we will tackle the fire - breathers and round up the remaining nasties plus any others which have so far escaped the net. In the meantime, if you want to practice the method of analysis, work out **M** for (a) a 5-headed Hydra and (b) a 9+2 dice Shedu. The answers will be given next week (but no prizes!).

OPEN BOX



OPEN BOX examines Science Fiction and Fantasy games and rulebooks currently in the shops. The reviews have been written by either independent authorities or members of the White Dwarf Test Panel.

Ratings on a 1-10 scale are given by the Test Panel and those immediately below are shown for comparison purposes:

	Diplomacy	D&D
Complexity	5	Player 3 Referee 10
Skill	10	10
Atmosphere	7	10
Originality	10	10
Presentation	7	5
OVERALL	10	10

Complexity, skill and originality are self-explanatory. Atmosphere means the feel of realism combined with excitement level. Presentation considers production quality, design and clarity of rules. Overall is a total analysis of the game itself, regardless of its presentation.

SORCERER

SPI – £6.25

Sorcerer is SPI's first Fantastic simulation game. In this game of magical conflict you get 400 counters printed on both sides, a 22" by 34" mapsheet, a 16 page booklet with the rules of play, player notes and nine scenarios which cover situations for 1 – 6 players.

The mapsheet depicts part of an imaginary world in a weakly magical universe, which is at the intersection of six strongly magical universes. Each type of magic is represented by a colour and each colour is more powerful than the next in a circular, non-transitive, order. That is to try to say that red is more powerful than purple which is more powerful than blue etc. to orange which is more powerful than red. There are some non-magical areas in this world and it is there that the human cities are sited.

The mapsheet is gridded with large 1" hexes which are either one of the six colours of magic, white (a combination of all six colours) or grey (non-magical). The counters come in the same six colours, although the shades are brighter than those on the map which was printed in pastel shades to prevent players becoming 'dazzle happy'. Also on the mapsheet are 2 copies of the Combat Results Table, and the Colour (or rather Color) Value Chart which gives the value of each colour of magic in each hex colour. Combat occurs between units in the same hex and the combat differential of two magical units depends upon the colour of the hex they are in and the colours of the units. Ability to handle these relationships is essential for success in Sorcerer.

Sorcerer was designed by Redmond Simonsen, responsible for the physical systems design of most SPI games, whose previous game design was Starforce – SPI's game of interstellar conflict. Both games posit, as they say, an imaginary situation with play that doesn't feature the fronts of conventional warfare, but rather centres around various focal points – the Stargates in Starforce and the cities and fortresses in Sorcerer. Redmond has since designed Dixie, the game in Strategy and Tactics 54, another hypothetical situation but this time an earthbound one.

The sequence of play in Sorcerer is first player moves, all players attack, second player moves, all players attack, and so on. Players should always attack if it is possible to do so because the attacker never suffers any losses. Defenders' combat losses are expressed as a certain number of steps lost. If a unit looses one step it is inverted to display the depleted value printed on the back. Another step lost and the unit is destroyed. Forces can also be pinned as a result of combat.

Sorcerer is a 'combined arms' game – the various unit types have different capabilities and it is important to combine them correctly. The main unit types are :–

Sorcerers which serve as 'leaders, organizers and recruiters'. Sorcerers can conjure (create) magical units, undeplete and unpin units (including themselves), create the all-devouring vortexes (vortices? SPI say vortexes), fling magic bolts, teleport themselves and human infantry across the board, change the colour of hexes and, in the optional rules, clone themselves and create cloaks of invisibility. Sorcerers have the power in one, two or three colours of magic. They are vital to success in the game. They are strong in power but weak in defence. A lone Sorcerer carelessly left in the wrong colour hex will be depleted by a magic bolt and destroyed in the next combat phase.

Human Infantry are also often vital for success as they give control of the human cities. Their strength is constant, i.e. unaffected by the colour of their hex. When lost they cannot be replaced.

Magical Units are trolls, demonic infantry, air dragons and enchanted fortresses. Fortresses are allocated and positioned at the start of a scenario. Sorcerers can conjure up as many of the other units as they can afford. The trolls are strong in attack but weak in movement – sometimes they cannot leave a hex without the help of a Sorcerer. Air dragons are the opposite, large movement factor, weak combat factor, with demonic infantry a balance of the two.

SPI rate the game with a complexity level of 6.5 (on their 1 to 9 scale). However, Sorcerer will be more complicated initially to the average gamer than, say, a Napoleonic game with the same complexity level, because he would already be familiar with the logic of the conflict and half the rules before he stared. However, again, there is a rationale to Sorcerer. Once this is understood, and familiarity with the Colour Value Chart gained, the mechanics of the game are easily handled and play flows freely. There are two solitaire scenarios in Sorcerer which serve to help the new player become familiar with these things.

Also in the game are four 2 player and three 3 player scenarios. One of the latter can expanded to 4, 5 or 6 players although I suspect it may be unbalanced with 4 or 5 players. The number of players in any scenario can be increased by having an additional player control Shir, the Black Sorcerer, who seeks to create confusion and disunity among the colour Sorcerers. Shir wins by stopping the others winning or by destroying the winner just after he's won. In which case he hasn't won . . . if you see what I mean. Shir's most powerful feature is his ability to act as an intelligent vortex.

SPI recommend The Rivalry of Balt and Dnai as the first 2 player scenario but I prefer the Uprising of the City States with its more "visual" victory conditions. Like most of the Sorcerer scenarios it presents the players with a fine decision as to what to do for the best. The Sorcerers' ability to teleport across the board to and from hexes of their colour(s) means that the foci of action can change suddenly. Players must always be wary of the bolt from the blue (sometimes literally). A solid "front line" does not protect your "rear" in Sorcerer, so when you go on the offensive don't neglect your home base(s).

Like most tactical games, Sorcerer can be expanded by the players. Brief notes on discovering new spells and creating new scenarios are given in the rules booklet. The scope is there, it's up to you.

Sorcerer is an enjoyable game. A fun game without being a facile game. Colourful in looks and language. Sorcerer will be more attractive to gamers who are more interested in wargames as games rather than as historical simulations. After all, as SPI say, "Any resemblance of characters in this simulation to persons living or unliving is purely magical'.

Rob Thomasson

RATINGS
Complexity: 8
Skill: 7
Atmosphere: 6
Originality: 7
Presentation: 5
OVERALL: 7

STARSHIP TROOPERS

Avalon Hill – £7.95

The appearance of Starship Troopers has been rather obscured by the number of Fantasy and SF games now available on the market. However, as the first foray into this field by Avalon Hill it deserves attention.

The game is based on the book of the same name by Robert Heinlein which won the Hugo award for best SF novel in 1959. I must admit that in my eyes Heinlein can do very little wrong but having seen good SF stories butchered by the film industry I approached this game with great suspicion. I was very pleasantly surprised to find that the game is an extremely accurate representation of situations contained in the book.

The game deals with various battles fought by the 'Mobile Infantry' during the course of an interstellar war. These infantry troopers are dropped onto planetary surfaces by orbiting starships to attack specific targets. Their 'drop capsules' are designed to fragment into many radar reflecting pieces so that together with radar jamming they may land on a planetary surface without being picked off by missiles. Each trooper is equiped with a suit of 'powered armor' including a jet pack. These suits give each man high protection, mobility and the firepower of a present day platoon.

The game contains seven scenarios depicting the troopers in action against two opposing races; the Skinnies and the Bugs. The battles are set in the correct 'historical' order from the book but also form a programmed learning sequence so that you can play the first game scenario, a commando raid on a Skinny city, as soon as you can set the board up and read the first two pages of the rule book. Each subsequent game introduces a few extra rules and pieces of equipment but always in a manageable quantity so that you are not deluged with pages of facts, figures and combat tables as with many current SF games.

Most of the more advanced games are concerned with raids or invasions of the 'Bug' planets. The Bugs live in tunnel complexes under the surface of the planet forming a sort of hive community. At the centre of each hive is the community Queen as well as the intelligent 'Brain' cast which telepathically controls the mindless warrior and worker bugs. The Terran player usually has few problems landing and setting up his troops but then his troubles really start. Although he is generally superior in firepower and mobility he does not know the layout of the Bug tunnel complexes, so that the Bugs may break through to the surface and mount an attack on any part of the board. Furthermore, the Terran player cannot tell the difference between the harmless workers and the warriors without landing a trooper on the same hex, thus making him more vulnerable to attack. To find the ideal Bug player I suggest you select the most bloodthirsty wargamer you know as the Bug Brains have no compunction about firing on their own units or exploding nuclear mines under them in order to kill the enemy!

As the scenarios progress, following the course of the book, the Terran player developes equipment to enable him to 'sense' the layout of the Bug tunnels and to attack them with nerve gas or with engineer units armed with nuclear demolitions. To balance this, his victory conditions are made more difficult, requiring him to send troopers down into the tunnel network, where the Bugs have the advantage in combat, to capture Brains and Queens or to release prisoners.

There is plenty of action in all the scenarios since it is almost impossible to evolve a static defensive strategy. Avalon Hill deserve the highest praise for their very imaginative use of victory points. For instance, these are used to penalise the elite Terran forces if they allow troops to be captured or if they kill innocent civilians during battles on the Skinny planets. In many scenarios the raiding force must board a 'retrieval boat' and return to their orbiting spacecraft before the end of the game. This means that they must hit the enemy hard before this and they must keep their units moving so that the enemy cannot guess where they will rendezvous to be picked up and mount a strong counter attack. One scenario even begins after a force has suffered a devestating defeat and the Terran player must evacuate his troops from the surface as best he can. A situation which is perhaps more realistic than any in the more conventional wargames.

One major feature of the appeal of Starship Troopers is that each Trooper marker represents one man, giving much more involvement with the fate of your units. Someone described one of their games to me as follows – "He stepped out of the aircar, a hole opened up in front of him and dozens of bugs poured out" – this shows a degree of 'identification' more normally associated with role-playing games. Unexpected situations can arise at any time – for example, in the evacuation scenario you manage to get almost all your men aboard the first of the two rescue boats when one of the stragglers is hit by a beam and is unable to make it to the boat before blast off. Do you abandon him or do you detach a rescue force to carry him to the second boat? Perhaps in another scenario the Bug player destroys you retrieval boat with a nuclear mine. Your troops are doomed but they are the elite of Earth's fighting forces; can they also destroy the Bugs in a suicide assault?

The amount of work that has gone into this game is impressive. Several times as I was reading through the 'programmed learning' style instructions I thought" Ah but they haven't allowed for . . . ." only to turn the page to the next scenario and finding that there were indeed rules dealing with whatever I'd thought of.

All in all this is probably the best SF game currently on the market because it has the well worked out background of Heinlein's novel and because it is an extrapolation of current military technology, allowing Avalon Hill to use their experience in game design. I hope this is not the last SF game that we shall see from them. The novel Starship Troopers is currently out of print but does give hints on the best tactics for each scenario. A related book is Joe Haldeman's Forever War which shares much of the technological background.

My only complaint is why, after producing such a good game, did AH put such a hideous illustration on the box lid? Something seemingly from a failed attempt to make *Flash Gordon* in colour – surely a guarantee to put most prospective players off the game.

Martin Easterbrook

RATINGS
Complexity: 9
Skill: 8
Atmosphere: 9
Originality: 9
Presentation: 7
OVERALL: 9

Pre-rolled characters, objectives, time limits and a points scoring system are all required for . . . .

Competitive D&D

by Fred Hemmings

The title, *Competitive D&D,* is really a contradiction in itself, since it implies the existence of a non-competitive version — a strange game indeed! However, there is a great difference between a normal dungeon or wilderness expedition and one run as a competition, providing the latter is done properly. A true competition cannot be run in an everyday dungeon since the variables between parties would make the result more to do with luck than skill. The immediate solution would seem to be a small dungeon which newly rolled characters could explore. But then another problem presents itself — one of the players could roll an 18+3+4 strong fighter thus giving his party an immediate advantage over all others.

That happened when a small competition was being held in a dungeon known as 'The Fabled Garden of Merlin' and created by Merle Davenport. No competition dungeon can be regarded as being typical (that after all is the whole point), but this particular one can be used to draw a few guidelines.

Eight people were involved in the competition, split into two groups of four. Each threw a new character and, with the aid of a Dungeonmaster (DM), the two parties entered its mazy depths, or at least tried. I say *tried* because the main problem with this dungeon was that apart from the garden itself (and its surrounding woods), nothing appeared to exist except for a door that could not be opened — but I am getting ahead of myself.

The DM told the parties that points would be awarded for the levels reached by the survivors (an encouraging opening line), lesser ones for treasure gained and monsters killed, one for each magic item found and more should such an item be identified. Top points award would go to a party who discovered something belonging to Merlin and succeeded in bringing it out, whilst no points at all would be gained unless the dungeon was left before the end of one hour. The latter rule was not included in the rules of the dungeon but seems a reasonable one and now is always used as the basic method of judging success when I run a competition.

Returning to the dungeon itself, both parties had to walk along a narrow path through woods until they came to a door with a gem embedded on both sides of it and flanked on either side by a chest and a large urn. Deciding to deal with these on the way out, our party tried to open the door and eventually succeeded in pressing the gems in the correct way to do this. Fortunately we did not attempt to do it in one of two other possible ways, either of which would almost certainly killed whoever was involved. The door opened. Beyond was the Garden of Merlin.

Entering, we found oursleves in an octagonal area containing a roughly diamond-shaped pool of water at each point over which, set on ten foot high platforms, were small braziers. The eight platforms all intersected in the middle of the lake at which point there was a twenty foot tall statue of Merlin, wearing a scarab necklace and a gold belt (both turned out to be potentially deadly since only one character class could use them safely). To the left and right side of the water there were arcs of three trees, whilst at the far side stood a small building which had a door around most of which was an arch of twelve gems and some unreadable writing (it turned out to be written in Lammasu!). The door would neither open nor break. After a while we discovered that things happened when the lowest tree branches were pulled, but only at the cost of my fighter being temporarily put to sleep by one tree and another character being killed by a constricting net. Finally, the door was removed. The difficulty of this operation can best be illustrated simply by saying that at the end of their hour the other party had not succeeded in finding the combination, despite the fact that the party were mostly experienced dungeoneers. The three remaining members of the party I was with pressed forward, negotiated a vertical shaft (avoiding two rather obvious traps), discovered, with the aid of a bag of flour, an invisible, talking, cowardly Mummy (yes, the genuine leprous touch version), skulking at the bottom, avoiding him and finally reached the first level! Having taken more time than we would have wished with the preceeding actions the party hurried on into the next room, which appeared to be empty, only for the two in front to fall through the floor which was made of starched paper. Both landed in a cauldron of cool bubbling water and one, who's head went beneath the surface, was made dumb for the rest of the expedition. The third member carefully made his way down. Another few minutes had been wasted, but at least the second level had been reached.

Onward! Onward! The party hurried to the door at the other end of the room and, scarcely pausing to listen, flung it open. The three Ogres in the room were surprised; our party horrified! We couldn't afford to retreat, time was against us.

"Sleep," snarled the fortunately still vocal magician, whilst the fighter and thief prepared to rush forward and melee the remaining two. However, all three were amazed to hear the triple crash of the monsters collapsing to the ground. Low dice Ogres? The party looked at one another; this was certainly a strange place, they thought, before rushing in and slitting their throats.

Opening the next door, each 300GPs richer, the party was confronted by steps going down, so roping themselves together they hurried, as fast as they dared, towards the third level.

Another door at the bottom and the party found themselves in a room. The side walls were lined with glass cases containing relics, some of which might be magical and all of which looked to be valuable. There appeared to be no other way out. Could this be the dungeon's nadir? Surely not. There appeared to be nothing here representing either Merlin or his works. The three searched for secret passages and found the back wall to be hollow but apparently without entrance. Fifteen minutes remained. Realising this the fighter drew forth a mace and, telling the others to stand back, began a series of smashing blows under which the false wall rapidly crumbled to reveal another vertical shaft.

"Let's do this room on the way back," he said, preparing to descend, only to find a peculiar gravity condition which permitted one to walk down the wall.

At the bottom of the shaft was the fourth level, a room, a chest and a plaque on the floor. Since there was no immediate danger apparent the others joined him. The chest was carefully ransacked, its traps being avoided, and next came the plaque. By an amazing stroke of good fortune, this was written in Shedu, a language our magician understood. It read 'In front of you lies the wisdom of the ages.' It was quickly discovered that the plaque could be pushed into the floor and the party was confronted by 18 black, wand-like sticks, equally divided between three cubby holes with a notice in lawful

reading 'Up and down, in and out'. The party was puzzled but unwilling at this stage to take many risks. This must surely be something to do with Merlin – they would take it with them. With eight minutes remaining the fighter and thief began wrapping the sticks up in separate bundles, being careful not to touch any of them, whilst the magician ran off down a corridor opening at the other end of the room to see where it led. After a moment he came hurring back and reported that, after a short distance it became slime coated and began to slope upward. Clearly this problem could not be tackled in the time remaining so the party began its retreat.

Up the shaft and into the museum room. The door was opened for a quick retreat. Aiming at the most valuable looking case the fighter's mace swung . . . . and bounced, swung . . . . and bounced again. The thief came up to attempt his skill on the locks whilst the fighter moved to the door. This was a wise precaution as it turned out, for, as the thief inserted his lock pick, the room's guardian (a little prematurely according to the specification), that terrible and deady monster, a Ghost, began to materialise. The thief fled, the door was slammed and the party rushed headlong up the stairs. Fortunately there was no pursuit.

The trip back to the garden was uneventful except for the dungeon once more proving its deadliness. A second member of the party was lost when, on placing the statue's necklace around his own throat, he too became stone. Carefully removing this from our dead colleage we wrapped it up, did the same with the gold belt and moved on.

The clock said four minutes to go as we left the garden to tackle the urns and chests. Employing extreme precautions we succeeded in obtaining most of the valuables they contained without further damage or loss, and, with a minute to spare left the grove with our loot.

There were both good things and bad about dungeon and expedition. At the time I enjoyed the dungeon, which was certainly a mental challenge, but looking back on it, having read the full specification I was less happy. It was too small, this being proved by the fact that four first level characters could reach the bottom (yes, we had got there), and return within an hour – a total of only 12 rooms, 14 if you include the garden and the surrounding woods. Also the number of traps was totally disproportionate, there being 23 of them, most of which must be regarded as being deadly (I am amazed that we survived). Many of the useful messages were written in obscure languages and the treasure to be obtained very limited (though this tends to be necessary in a competition-type environment).

One thing I would like to credit our DM with was the provision of 'magic knapsacks'. These wonderous items, both useful and standardized without being overpowerful, contain one of each item appearing on the D&D equipment list although their weight is negligible. However, once an item has been taken out it can never be put back nor can any new item be put into one. On the other hand he required that each character be a newly rolled one although various details within the specification made it absolutely clear that it was designed for a much more powerful party. However, as it was the same for both parties as a contest it remained legitimate. Very restrictive was our lack of numbers; with only four first level characters it was impossible, until right at the end, to take any but the most vital of risks. Also, although the ability to sleep three Ogres may well have saved our lives, this, after an invisible, cowardly, talking Mummy, made us wonder what other twisted monsters might exist. Fortunately we did not attempt to experiment with the Ghost, it was exactly as in the D&D rules!

There were far more lessons to be drawn from this expedition than the simple one of not leaving the abilities of the characters entering to chance. Thus when, with the aid of Chris Bursey, I came to build my own competition dungeon for use at *D&D-Day* on 12th March 1977, Merlin's Garden and more recent experiences were strong influence on the design, objectives and points allocation.

Points allocation and the use of pre-rolled characters be described in *White Dwarf 2*.

NO WAY OUT?

Solutions on page 22

Puzzles expert, DAVID WELLS, turns his talents to D&D with a regular column of puzzles, riddles and cryptograms based on D&D adventures

Tweedledum and Tweedledee

One of the perils of the Looking Glass Forest is the presence of Tweedledum and Tweedledee. They are totally unreliable, apart from the well-known fact that Tweedledee always and only lies immediately after Tweedledum has lied. It is after acting on their information that many dungeon expeditions have met with doom.

This time Tweedledum and Tweedledee were sitting at a fork in the road, arguing as usual, when a party arrived and asked them which road they should take to reach the bridge over the Singing Waters.

The conversation went like this:

Tweedledum: If some of the statements we make are true, you should turn RIGHT.
Tweedledee: I say you should turn LEFT.
Tweedledum: However, if and only if we always tell the truth, you should go back the way you came.
Tweedledee: No, they shouldn't! They should turn LEFT!
Tweedledum: Nonsense! They should only go left if there is a Z in the month.
Tweedledee: Two plus two equals four, so there, bonehead!

At this remark, Tweedledum started to punch Tweedledee, who smashed him back, and it was obvious that the dungeoneers would get no more sense, or nonsense, out of them. In which direction should they have gone?

The Hireling

Hirelings can be very unhelpful at the best of times. Despite the gift of 10 GPs, a dungeon party had only managed to extract some unitelligible sounds from a Little Old Man they had encountered outside a room they wished to enter. Nevertheless, it appeared that the elf hireling seemed to understand what was being said. However, he was only willing to translate three of the four statements the Little Old Man made as the party had been previously foolhardy which resulted in the death of his friend, Fifo.

The party, therefore, had to fall back on their own wits to translate the remaining statement.

Can you identify the translations of each statement, and translate the fourth?

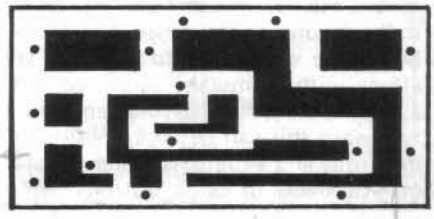
The Statements:
serut araton
tima nem sene tekalo
sen rato kor
nem rato serut

The translations, not in any particular order:
dangerous animal will attack you
take yourselves away
the treasure cannot be taken

The Orcs' Den

"So there I was", continued Mordus the Magician, "stranded in the Orcs' den with only three hits left and Orcs on either side of me. I knew where the rest of the party were, but I had to pass at least three Orcs to reach them, and although I could do so in three different ways, each seemed as risky as the other. See, here is the lay-out of their den, the Orcs are marked by dots. Unfortunately, I'd used up my sleep spell and . . . . . ."

While Mordus talked on, his listeners were working out exactly whereabouts in the den he had been trapped. What was his exact location, and where were the rest of the party?



Is D&D a talking-book or a serious wargame? Both schools of thought are analysed to discover which is best suited for . . . .

D&D Campaigns

by Lewis Pulsipher

Part 1 : Philosophy

Dungeons and Dragons is probably the most popular game in the USA produced in the past five years. As more sets reach Britain it is approaching a similar level of popularity. D&D campaigns are very rare here, however, because most referees are insufficiently experienced to set one up. This series ought to help those who have some refereeing experience but are unfamiliar with campaigns, but is aimed at players who want to start refereeing on the right footing. It is based on wide reading and experience with D&D campaigns in the United States. Of course, there are many ways to play D&D. I must of necessity concentrate on my way. Readers who are entirely unfamiliar with D&D are strongly advised to first read Games Workshop's D&D introductory pamphlet. That introduction will help immensely, but the following is written for someone who has at least played the game or read the rules.

Some abbreviations are commonly used when discussing Dungeons and Dragons (D&D). Rather than say 'six-sided die', 'D6' can be used, and so on for each type. Character class and level may be abbreviated as 4F (fourth level fighter), 6MU (sixth level magic-user), and so on. 'Monsters' means all non-players, including men. 'Creatures' usually means any living thing. In the following I will often refer to character levels by 'low', 'middle', and 'high'. These terms mean respectively about first to third level, fourth to sixth, and seventh to ninth. In a long campaign characters higher than ninth may be developed, but this should not be common.

This series is divided into three sections, Philosophy, Mechanics, and Rules Recommendations. The first concerns how the referee wants to characterise his game, what style he intends to adopt; something referees seldom think about but ought to. The second concerns the actual mechanics of setting up a campaign and running a game, going beyond the vague brief suggestions in the rules. The third section concerns rule clarifications and some recommended interpretations of ambiguous rules, with explanations of their impact on a campaign. For reasons of space I have omitted a multitude of minor subjects.

D&D Styles

D&D players can be divided into two groups, those who want to play the game as a game and those who want to play it as a fantasy novel, i.e. direct escapism through abandonment of oneself to the flow of play as opposed to the gamer's indirect escapism – the clearcut competition and mental exercise any good game offers. There are two subdivisions in each division. The game-players may emphasise player skill in players-vs-monsters (and sometimes vs other players) or they may prefer players-vs-puzzles (riddles, traps, mazes, etc.) to monster slaying. Of course no D&D campaign is purely one or the other. The escapists can be divided into those who prefer to be told a story by the referee, in effect, with themselves as protagonist, and those who like a silly, totally unbelievable game. In either case, there are two ways this can be accomplished. One is by innumerable dice rolls and situations which call for chance, especially magical decks of cards, buttons, levers, and so on – lottery D&D. The other is by manipulation of the situation by the referee, however he sees fit. In California, for example, this leads to referees who make up more than half of what happens, what is encountered and so on, as the game progresses rather than doing it beforehand. In either case the player is a passive receptor, with little control over what happens.

There is nothing inherently wrong with the silly/escapist method, but it is a strange way for game players to act, and many *White Dwarf* readers are presumably game players as well as SF fans. Gary Gygax has made it clear that D&D is a wargame, though the majority of players do not use it as such. I personally consider the silly/escapist style to be both boring and inferior for any campaign, though all right occasionally for a weird evening. I hope to expalin my reasons in this series. I also prefer monster fighting to puzzle solving, and won't say much about the latter. The principles are the same, just the opponents are changed.

I prefer to use the printed game rules whenever possible. The fewer changes made in the rules directly affecting players, the less the referee needs to explain to new players. In the innumerable ambiguous cases, I interpret rules so as to promote player skill and restrain high-level MUs, even though I prefer to be a magic-user.

Although enough D&D material has been published in magazines and supplements to fill several books, a referee should try to be self-consistent in what rules and monsters he uses. In other words, just because TSR has published reams of rules for gods in their last supplement doesn't mean you must or should use any of them. In most cases it will be more consistent to use one's own ideas of what the gods are like. Again, just because the psionics rules are there doesn't mean one must use them. They are confusing and require a complete overhaul of a world in order to add the psionic monsters which make the psionic character's life dangerous, compensating for its advantages. If you cannot or will not make the necessary changes, you shouldn't use the psionic rules. Or, if you think psionics smell of science fiction rather than fantasy, you are under no obligation to use them. Think about what you want, don't simply throw into the game any new D&D rules or monsters you can lay hands on. There is also no reason to retain old rules, such as monster tables, which can be improved without putting players new to your campaign at much disadvantage.

This idea of self-consistency or integration must be pursued further. One of the most destructive notions I've encountered in D&D is the belief that 'anything goes'. This is fine for a pick-up or silly-fun game, but contributes an air of unreality and recklessness which can be fatal to a campaign, and which in any case is offensive to many players. Inevitably, an 'anything goes' campaign tends to be one in which player skill counts for little, for two reasons. First, players have no foundation to base decsions on; never knowing what to expect, they cannot plan a rational response. Second, the 'anything goes' game tends to be dominated by dice rolls or referee manipulation. A great deal usually depends on the saving throws of characters. For example, one of the favourite ploys of the 'anything goes' referee is to devise panels of buttons or decks of cards similar to a Deck of Many Things; often involving more far-reaching changes. Players push buttons or pick cards and great things occur. Players seldom do much to earn the rewards or penalties – the cards are easy to find, and the dice determine results.

One may protest that the skillful player can avoid picking from the card deck, or fooling with the lever or button, and so on. Unfortunately, the structure of this kind of game is such that, if a *player* (not a character) wants to get ahead, he must take his chances. The reasoning is simple. A player can always roll new characters. In a luck-dominated game, even if half the time a player's character is seriously harmed, the rest of the time he benefits to the same degree or more. Consequently, the player who chooses not to take the ridiculous risks may die less of ten, but his characters will often be mediocre compared to those who dared and were lucky. The player who trusts to fate will lose many characters, but his other characters will prosper. In other words, the 'law of averages' works against the cautious player. The key is that the *character* run by the player does not have to act rationally because it has no separate existence. In many cases, only an insane person would accept the risks involved in cards, buttons, and levers. It's too much like Russian Roulette. But the *player* isn't the one who may die or be maimed; in fact, if his character is crippled, he can easily get him killed and start a new one. Thus this form of the game forces players to depend on luck and at the same time contributes an air of unreality to the entire proceeding. Even fantastic fiction, despite the name, possesses an internal self-consistency, and the characters in fantasy fiction usually act as rational, though brave, people. In Dungeons and Dragons, if the campaign is not designed correctly it becomes unbelievable, for a D&D player may, along with the fiction reader, say 'I don't believe men would do this'. Each referee must ask himself as he sets up his campaign what rules and items would seem believable if he read about them in a fantasy novel.

Even in a fantasy game, moderation and self-discipline are virtues necessary to top refereeing. While campaigns may be run on other bases, I believe that a skill-game campaign is likely to satisfy people more in the long run. Some people prefer luck and passivity, but they are seldom game players. If you feel a need to get drunk and/or stoned, however, try lottery D&D the similarities are surprising.

Referees must not forget that the fun a person has is relative to what he expects. One group of science fiction fans I know of is accustomed to beginning characters at third or fourth level, parties of eighth to twelfth level and higher, innumerable magic items, and super-monsters which make dragons look like child's play. In a less powerful game these people will often be bored, for obvious reasons. On the other hand, players accustomed to a more subdued campaign might be delighted or terrified by the rewards and dangers of the situation which would bore the supergamers. A person accustomed to painstakingly working his way up from first level over a long period will feel great power when he can finally cast a fireball; one who begins at third or fourth level and works up rapidly will need to reach ninth or tenth level to get the same thrill, if he ever can. From the referee's standpoint the subdued group is much more manageable. Players stay at lower levels longer, giving the referee more time to become accustomed to rules and typical spells. For the same reason the referee will not need to devise situations which will give superparties difficulty, a very trying job at best.

I must point out before I continue that skill and experience are not synonymous. I have known people who played D&D for months but could never do well on their own. Others have shown remarkable aptitude in their first game, within the limitations of their knowledge of the rules. D&D is a simulation of life, a life we believe could exist though it does not. This real-life element permits even the inexperienced to play the game well through application of intelligence and alertness.

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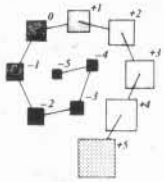

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METAGAMING CONCEPTS

THE KEEPER OF THE FLAME

by Taupi

Ten years is a long time for a classic game to go unnoticed. It happend though to . . . .

THE WARLORD

by Steve Jackson

In 1969, I'd just discovered Diplomacy.
I was a man possessed. Everyone of my friends and acquaintances had to put up with my incessant pestering: "You *must* come round and play this new game from the States. It takes 8 hours! You pass little notes around and have conferences in different rooms! You fall out with your friends!" Most of my friends became instant converts, but one remained unimpressed. "Not bad," he commented, "but you ought to try The Warlord."

The Warlord, as I was soon to discover, was another war game and, on first impressions, appeared simply to be "Risk" in a plain box. Picking up a bag of Lego bits, my friend explained: "Now these are the nuclear missiles . . ." and went on through the rules as we set up the board and started a game.

Three hours later I was spellbound. I controlled 3 expanding empires in Spain, Northwest Russia and the Balkans and had 2 long-range nuclear missiles aimed at the foot of Italy. I was being sorely beaten in the north, but stood a good chance of joining forces around the Mediterranean, which would allow me to overrun North Africa.

With five of us playing, the game lasted 4½ hours. As it happened, I was crushed miserably towards the end. But what a game! By 9.30 the next morning, I had already posted off a cheque for my own copy. Diplomacy, admittedly, was still my No. 1, but The Warlord had leaped straight into my charts at second place.

Empires

The Warlord is a game of empires. Each player starts with a small number of expanding empires which spread and dissolve about the board as play progresses. Battles are resolved using a die, but in a totally original and highly entertaining way. Nuclear missiles are built and fired, leaving radioactive wastelands dotted around the board. The rules are clear and simple, yet there is great scope for strategic planning and quick-talking diplomacy.

The board comes in four sections, each printed on heavy card. They depict an area including Europe, Central Russia, North Africa and half – or even quarter-board games are possible if a shorter game is preferred. The board is broken up into 320 regions of various types: Cities (yellow), Urban Areas (red), Rural Areas (green), Mountains (brown) and Wastelands (white). All 25 Cities are represented on cards, which are dealt out evenly at the start of the game and a player's empires originate from these Cities.

Players each have a large stack of plastic counters (which represent their armies), and start by placing one on each of the cities they have been dealt. As in Risk, players are due a certain number of extra armies every turn, which they place on the board in and around already-established empires. This results in empires expanding rather like the wave ripples around a stick in water. Expansion inevitably results in border clashes, and that's where we get into the game's most original aspect – combat resolution.

Battles – A Guessing Game

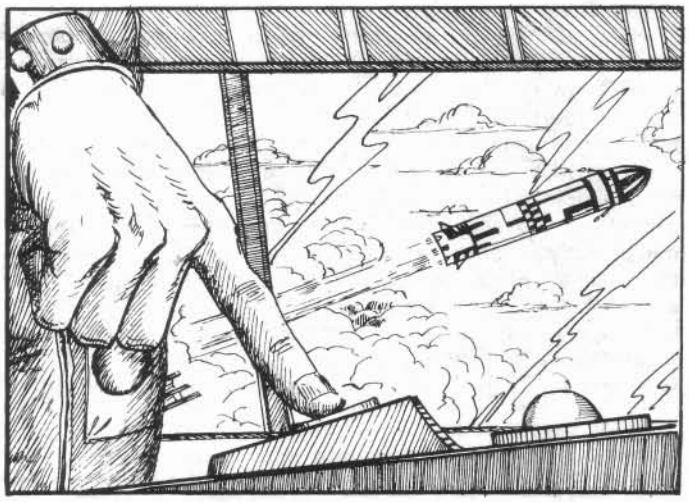
Player A is due 5 extra armies in his French empire. He would like to seal off the gateway through from Britain by ousting player B's army in Brittany. He places one counter in Belgium, to continue his previous expansion programme, and places the other 4 in Normandy in preparation for his attack. He takes the die and hides it behind his hand, secretly choosing a number between "one" and the number of armies he is attacking with (i.e., "four"). His choice is placed face up on the die. Player B then has to try to *guess* the number chosen. Neat, eh? And to help each player make his choice:
If the defender guesses *wrong,* the *chosen number* of armies are moved into the captured province, while the defender's piece is taken hostage (removed from the board and held by the attacker).
If the defender guesses *right,* the attacker loses the *chosen number* of armies.

Thus the whole business of die-choosing is not simply a matter of selecting a number at random. If the attacker wants a fair number of armies to end up in the conquered region, he will choose a higher number – *and the defender will realise that.* If not, he is more likely to choose a low number, so as not to risk heavy losses. Again, *the defender will realise.*

This procedure of making war really is a fine touch; simple, yet effective, and perfectly balanced.

Converting Hostages to Missiles

But remember those captured hostages? In his turn, a player continues attacking and expanding his empires until he cannot, or has no desire to, do anything else. At his turn's end, with suitable gloating chuckles, he returns his captives to their owners, at the same time taking from the missile pool stages of nuclear missile, in equal numbers, in exchange. These stages snap together and up to a four-stage rocket may be built. This is then placed on the board, in its owner's territory, and may be fired anytime during his *next* turn (thus giving all other players the chance to raid his missile site).



Now missiles are nasty things. If a missile explodes within one of your empires, you could quite easily be blown out of existence. When a Warlord gets to explode a missile, he becomes a very powerful man and everyone seems suddenly to come over with a very cocktail party-type politeness when speaking to him. A missile can be exploded anywhere within its range, and its *range* (measured in *regions*) is the same as the number of stages it has been built to. Thus, a three-stager can be aimed up to three regions away from its base.

These missiles are nuclear and therefore explode with devastating effects. The region which a missile lands on becomes *radioactive* and a black radioactive marker is placed on that area. The regions surrounding the radioactive area are *devastated* and all armies therein are removed. A missile blows a great big hole in the board, for example, a missile exploded in the Appenines is capable of wiping out the whole of Italy.

The resultant radioactive areas, which begin to appear around the board like an outbreak of skin blemishes, remain

impassable for the rest of the game (unless a player *reconstructs,* which I won't go into here), but devastated areas may be re-colonised straight away, usually by the missile-firer. In addition, if another missile happens to lie in a devastated area, it *chain-reacts* and blows up on its spot. This may, in turn, chain-react another missile. There is no limit to the carnage possible!

Strategy

There is plenty of scope for strategy in the game. Certain areas, for example, are more easily defensible than others. To attack a City, you cannot choose a "one" on the die. When attacking Mountains, a number higher than "three" may not be chosen, no matter how many armies are attacking. When attacking across sea, the defender is allowed two guesses at the number chosen. Mountains and seas therefore form natural defensive boundaries for empires. Also, it is important to establish links, if possible, between two or more of a player's separate empires, as one large empire has many advantages over two smaller ones.

Diplomacy also forms an important part of the game. It is possible, for example, to 'rig' battles: the defender purposfully chooses the wrong number so as to allow the attacker (his ally) to gain hostages and build missiles, to be used against a mutual enemy. However, when this happens, the whole rigmarole of selecting on the die must be followed through *just in case* the defender decides to double-cross at the last minute!

History

The Warlord was invented by a University lecturer, Mike Hayes, who has so far produced the game privately, on very short print runs (hence the high price). Since its original conception, the rules have been changed very little, although the board had a face-lift a couple of years ago to include 7 extra Cities. There are only two major rule changes, concerning the allocation of extra armies and captured missiles. Mike obviously had his reasons for changing these rules but personally, I prefer the originals. Extra armies may now be claimed for every 4 Mountain areas and every 5 Wastelands within an empire (this will mean little to those who have not actually played the game), whereas the original rules allowed claims only for City, Urban and Rural areas. To my mind, Mountains have their own defensive advantages and need not be doubly-bonused by generating extra armies. Wastelands, as their name suggests, ought to be generally useless.

All captured missiles used to be reduced to one-stagers on capture in the first edition, while they are now reduced to zero-stagers. Point taken about wanting to reduce the effectiveness of captured missiles, but perhaps this is overdoing it a bit?

Although short, the rules are very clear indeed. The only point we have ever argued about (and here again, this will mean little to non-players), concerns the placing of missiles in empires linked within a particular turn. As the hostages were taken before the empires were linked, must the missiles thus gained be placed within the original boundaries of the two empires, or can they be added together to form a larger missile which can then be placed anywhere within the new empire? We favour the latter in this case.

No game is properly reviewed without a mention of its bad points, and The Warlord has two: Firstly it is expensive, although there *are* over 1200 plastic counters, missiles, markers etc., and secondly it takes a long time to play a full-board game. I once played a game which lasted a whole weekend, from 10pm on Friday until 11:30pm on Sunday, with only about 8 hours off for sleep and half-hour delays as our host made us all sandwiches and coffee! A shorter game is easily playable if only a quarter or half of the board is used (a quarter-board game can usually be finished comfortably within 2–2½ hours), but the full-board game with more than 3 players can take anything from 4 hours upwards.

But all-in-all, The Warlord is one of the few great undiscovered games in the country, and it is still well up in my top ten of favourite games.

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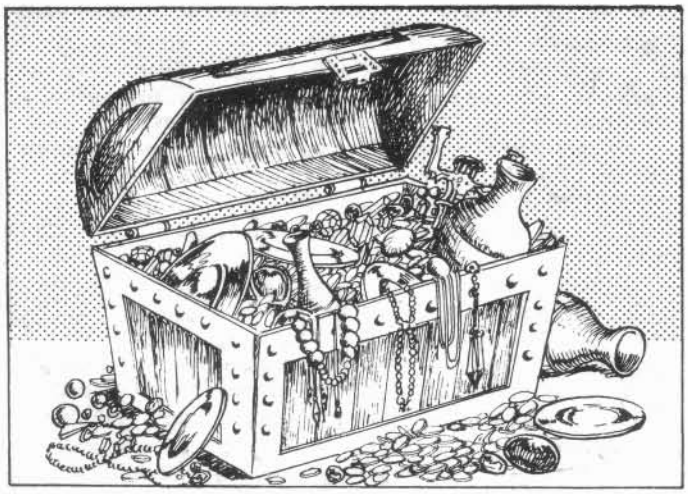

TREASURE CHEST is open for contributions relating to D&D additional rules, character classes, magic systems, objects, tricks and traps etc.

Helm of Vision

by Steven Littlechild

This helm, which can be worn by fighters or clerics, resembles an ordinary fighter's helm. However, it is gold plated, which alone gives it a value of 750 GPs and in combat it has an additional protection bonus of 10%. The two eye slits are fitted with clear, diamond-like gems and have the following properties:

(i) They act independantly as Gems of Seeing.
(ii) They act together as double-range Gems of Seeing.
(iii) They give an infravision ability, range 60 feet.
(iv) In direct sunlight they have the following additional properties:
  (a) Monsters of 4th level or below are confused as per a Confusion spell
  (b) All monsters combat at -15%
  (c) Morale has a penalty of -10%
(v) If removed from the helm they become merely low value gems worth 10GPs each.
(vi) They have the following effects, depending on the alignment of the wearer:
  (a) **Lawful** – The wearer sees with 'time sight'. That is, the wearer sees any polymorphed, invisible etc. man/monster in its true shape and will not be aware of the polymorphed shape.
  The wearer sees all illusions as illusions.
  The wearer sees through a disguise 90% of the time.
  (b) **Neutral** – The wearer sees illusions as illusions 50% of the time. The wearer sees through a disguise 50% of the time. The wearer will see an evil intention towards him 'written all over the face' of the potential evil doer.
  (c) **Chaos** – The wearer sees illusions as realities.
  The wearer will never see through a disguise.
  The wearer will see a non-human monster 50% of the time as follows:
    (i) A weaker monster will appear to be stronger than himself.
    (ii) A stronger monster will appear to be weaker.

What's wrong with D&D

. . . . and what I'm doing about it!

by Andrew D. Holt

When D&D first became available in this country we tried it at City Games Club, and rapidly became addicted. At this time the whole concept was so novel that we tended to ignore the less satisfactory aspects of the game.

After some time, however, disenchantment with certain aspects set in – these being, in particular, the combat and magic systems, and the "party" effect.

Then I heard some details about a role-playing game, run by Ed Smith, in which one of my friends was participating, and decided to use this information as the basis for a major redesign of several aspects of D&D to increase its "realism" (plausibility). I am very grateful to Ed for all his help both directly and indirectly in my design.

The Combat System

The first problem about the D&D combat system is *which* system? There are at least three different systems given in D&D and its supplements but not one of them is explained in a clear and unambiguous form.

Common to all these systems are certain failings: there is no opportunity for the exercise of player skill, and hit probabilities depend only on the 'skill' of the attacker and the armour of the defender – not on the defender's skill. Also armour has the effect of reducing chances of being hit rather than reducing the effect of a hit (but increasing the likelihood of being hit).

The basic systems have the advantage of simplicity, but, if this is desired, a system of attack and defence factors with a combat results table (like most board wargames) would give as good results with less complication. The main difficulty with making the system "more realistic" is the time a fight may then take. In the case of my system, however, this is a positive advantage for it enables a more "individual" approach to the game as I mention below.

I use a character's skill and effective speed – together with a couple of other factors – as parameters to a sort of card game where the attacker plays cards representing blows which the defender has to parry (with cards) before he, in his turn, attacks. If a blow is unparried then the strength of the blow is computed and considered versus the defence layers (armour, skin, flesh, bone, etc.) in the area hit – damage is taken on these layers and the effect noted. Damage in special areas, (e.g. broken arm) has an appropriate effect, and if total accumulated damage exceeds a certain limit a monster will surrender, run away, or even fall unconscious.

The Magic System

The standard D&D magic system is clearly patterned after that in "The Dying Earth" stories by Jack Vance, where a spell takes careful study to impress on the mind, and then after use needs re-impressing before it can be used again. In standard D&D this sort of system is essential to maintain play-balance when high-level magic-users are around, but it has problems of its own: players find it most "unrealistic"; "detect" spells are rarely used (no sane MU would take "detect magic" rather than "sleep" or "charm person" without a very important reason!), and sensible low-level MUs have very boring expeditions.

As I wanted to put some degree of player skill into the magic (as in the combat), my players must remember their spells – to cast a spell they start by building up power, then they say the spell (usually putting down cards with the appropriate symbols on). If they get the spell correct it works (no saving throws!), if they make a mistake it fails, or backfires. A simple spell would be, e.g. "Sun in Gemini, Darb" which is the light spell, a more complex one is "Not Libra of Taurus over Cancer with Mars, Geronimo" a stun spell that most players have written on the back of their shields!

Characters usually carry their magic book around with them, and refer to it before casting a difficult spell – if they have time!

The "Party" Effect

A major cause of boredom amongst D&D players is the practice of going round in parties of 6 or more. Generally one or two players make all the decisions while the rest get bored and often disrupt the game with side conversations and so on. Unfortunately the party system is necessary for two main reasons: the DMs difficulty of coping with several separate groups, and the improbability of a group of less than 6 characters surviving a normal dungeon expedition.

The DM finds it difficult to handle several groups because most of the players, except those in the group to which he is currently talking, are idle, causing the same boredom/disruption effect as in large parties. If the waiting groups can be given something to do this system works fairly well as the players can be more "individual". Further, the DM does not have to adjust the guardians of each room to the numbers entering, as there will only be two to four in a group.

In my system when a group gets into a fight, I use some of the waiting players to play the monsters, and start working with with another group. The nature of the combat system keeps the fight going long enough for this approach to work, and the players *enjoy* being the monsters!

Final Remarks

The above sections consider the three main problems with D&D – there are many other problems: the experience system gives greater benefit for finding treasure than for winning fights, some monsters' properties differ widely from those in folklore and fiction, there is too much variability in the characteristics of a character, and so on.

There is also much to commend in D&D, the general concept is an inspiration; and it has made the "role-playing" game, and the free Kriegspiel in general, respectable and popular.

When originally designing the D&D rules, it is unlikely that Messrs. Gygax and Arneson imagined then the multitude of character classes that are now to be found in their game. It is also extremely unlikely that the class described below will ever gain "official" status. However, White Dwarf *is always willing to give space to the lighter side of D&D and hence the introduction of a new character class:*

The Pervert

by Ian Waugh

The prime requisite for the Pervert is Charisma, which must be *below* 9. However, both Strength and Constitution must exceed 12. Alignment can be heterosexual, bisexual or homosexual. Perverts are armour class 7 when wearing black leather armour and using an unsheathed weapon, but suffer a 50% chance of loss of sight per melee turn if weapon is hand held. Suggested Artifact: Elven dirty mac.

Level	Title	Experience Points	Hit Dice(6-sided)
1	Peeping Top	0	1
2	Voyeur	1200	2
3	Graffiti Artist	2400	3
4	Obscene Caller	4800	4
5	Flasher	9600	5
6	Streaker	20000	6
7	Groper	40000	7
8	Pornographer	60000	8
9	Rapist	90000	9
10	Pervert	125000	10

Whatever turns you on . . . . Ed.

Poison

by Alan Youde

One of the least well defined aspects of D&D is, in my opinion, the effects of poison. I think most players and DMs would agree that it is unreasonable that a high level, high constitution character who fails to make his saving throw can be killed by the bite of a ½ Hit Die Spider! Poison can be nasty, of course, but in real life I think its effects are far less vicious than in the basic D&D rules.

Don Turnbull has for some time used a system which I like – if you do not make your saving throw you take damage based on the monster's ordinary damage possibilities, and carry on taking the same damage each melee round until either your character dies or makes his saving throw.

I have recently seen Metamorphosis Alpha and think that the poison table in those rules, with a few adaptations, could be an improvement on Don's system. I therefore suggest the following rules for poisons:

When a character is poisoned, he must try to make his saving throw. If he succeeds all is well; if he fails he takes the damage indicated by the table below during the melee round in which the poisoning took place. If he survives he can try to save in the next melee round, taking the same damage if he fails again, and so on until he makes his saving throw or dies.

STRENGTH OF POISON
(=LEVEL OF MONSTER)

CONSTITUTION	½	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15+
18	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	½	1	2	3	D
17	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	½	1	2	3	D	D
16	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	½	1	2	3	D	D	D
15	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	½	1	2	3	D	D	D	D
14	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	½	1	2	3	D	D	D	D	D
13	*	*	*	*	*	*	½	1	2	3	D	D	D	D	D	D
12	*	*	*	*	*	½	1	2	3	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
11	*	*	*	*	½	1	2	3	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
10	*	*	*	½	1	2	3	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
9	*	*	½	1	2	3	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
8	*	½	1	2	3	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
7	½	1	2	3	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
6	1	2	3	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
5	2	3	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
4	3	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
3	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D

½, 1, 2 and 3 are the dice of damage taken. As the chart relates poison strength to constitution, the die to be used for hits, i.e. 8-sided for fighters, 6-sided for clerics and 4-sided for magic users.

D = automatic death

* = no effect

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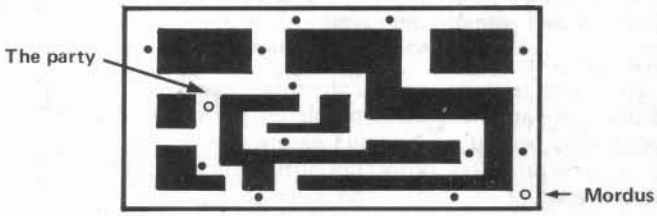
NO WAY OUT?

SOLUTIONS:

Tweedledum and Tweedledee
Clearly, they do not both always tell the truth, but they do sometimes tell the truth, (last statement). Therefore, using the knowledge that Tweedledee lies if and only if Tweedledum has just lied, both the first two instructions, to turn RIGHT and LEFT, are wrong. So, the party should return the way it came.

The Hireling
The translations given are of the 2nd, 3rd, and 1st statements respectively. The remaining statement translates as 'animal take treasure'.

The Orcs' Den



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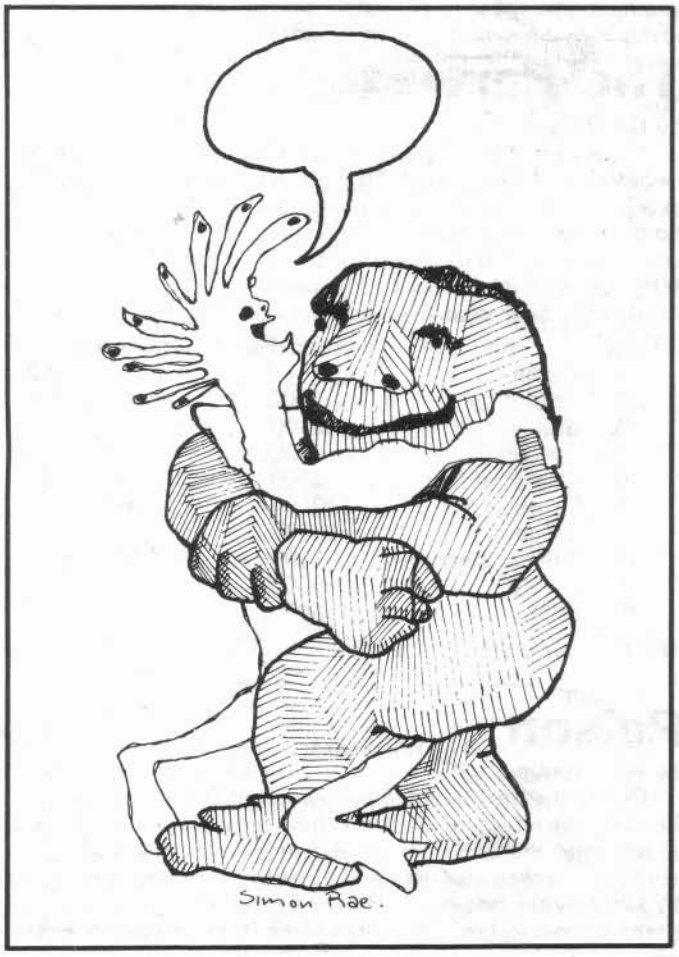

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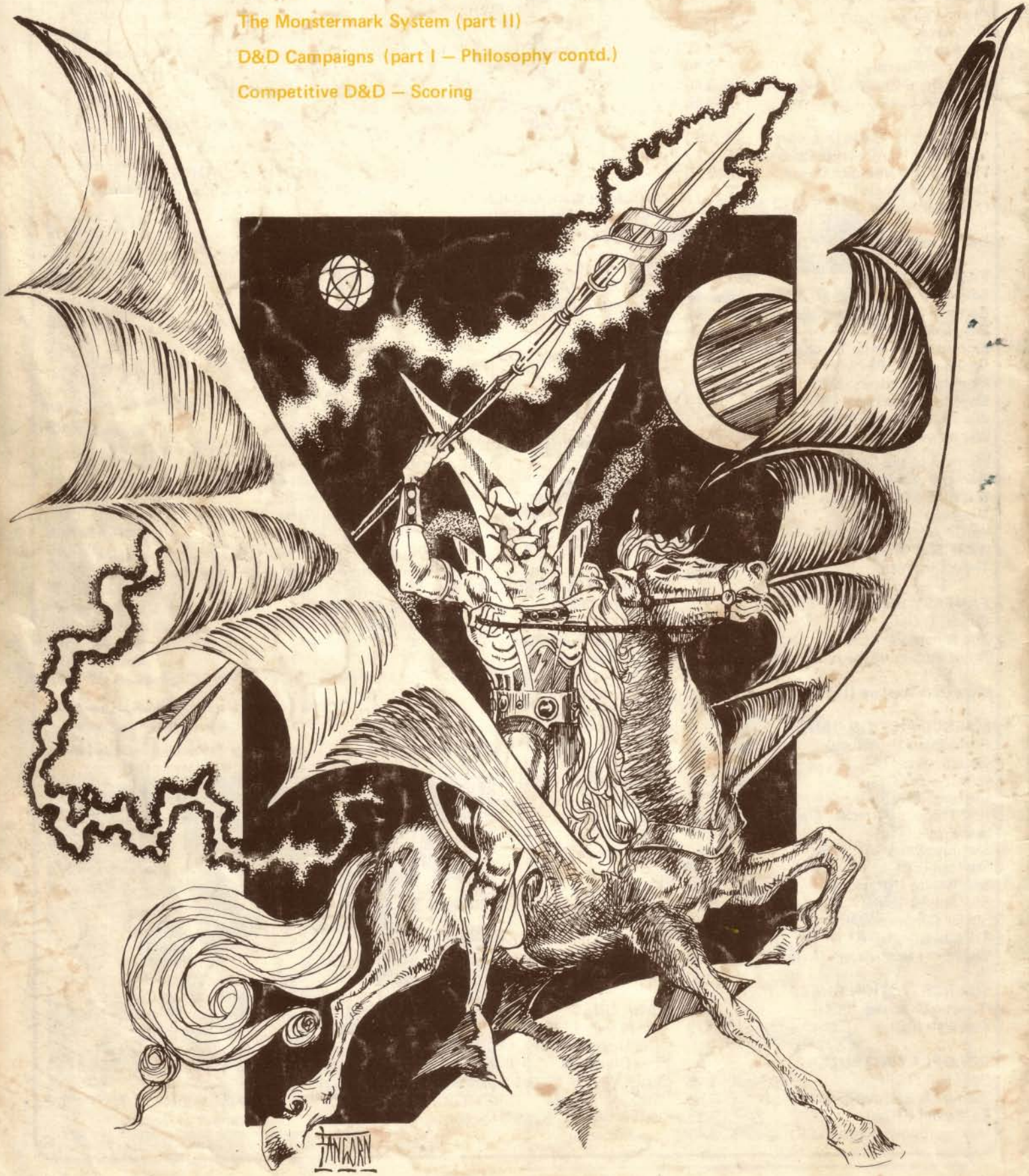
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